

Looking Back

Women's Concerns Directors reflect

COMPILER'S COMMENTS

For 30 years now, someone has been designated to work with women's issues at MCC. The titles of those who have filled this role have changed over the years, from "administrative assistant," to "coordinator," to "director." The description of the work has also shifted gradually from "women's concerns" to "gender issues." But some common threads run through these 30 years. In this issue, some of the people who have filled this role in the United States and Canada reflect on their time at the Women's Concerns desk.

During the three years I was director of MCC U.S. Women's Concerns, I finished seminary, served on our pastoral team at church, and gave birth to two children; so I'm sure I was sometimes distracted from the intensity of this work. Still, the memories of the high points and low points are vivid.

One common low point in most of these stories is the discovery that working toward gender equality is hardest when working on equality issues within MCC. Through the years, when Women's Concerns turned its attention outward on society, even on our constituent congregations, we had institutional support. But when the lens turned inward, when the Women's Concerns desk focused on the status of

women within MCC as an institution, the struggles became more bitter.

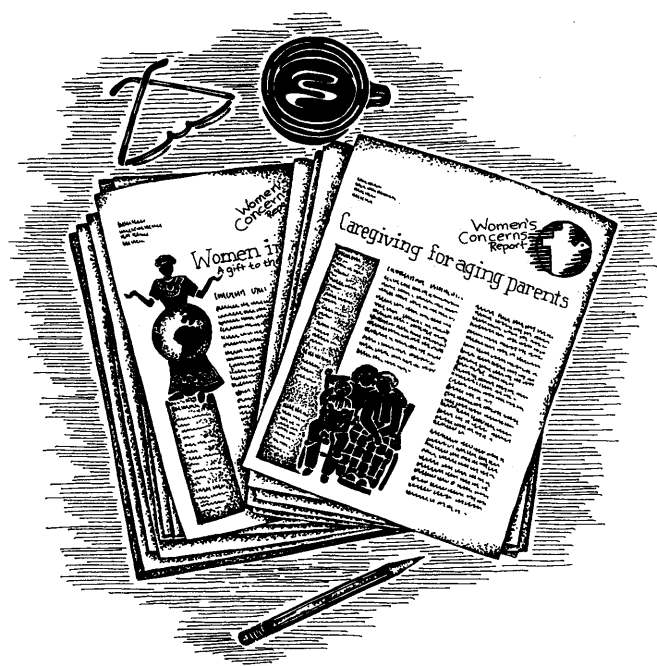
Analysis makes the people being analyzed uncomfortable. They sense their good intentions are mistrusted. I came to the Women's Concerns desk after working on the gender project in MCC's Overseas Peace Office. In that project we developed a tool to do gender analysis with MCC's partners overseas. In interviews in overseas program settings, we heard clear suggestions that if MCC was subjecting our partners to a gender analysis, we should also turn the spotlight on ourselves. But when I moved to the MCC U.S. Women's Concerns desk, I found that the bitterest

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Gwen Groff is pastor of Bethany Mennonite Church in Bridgewater Corners, Vermont. She and Robert have two young children. She served with MCC three years in England and five years in the MCC Peace Office before her three years as director of MCC U.S. Women's Concerns (1996–99).

In interviews in overseas program settings, we heard clear suggestions that if MCC was subjecting our partners to a gender analysis, we should also turn the spotlight on ourselves.

struggles in the past had occurred when there was an attempt to do internal analysis without MCC's mandate or support. One of the joys in following this thread through the stories in this issue is that it appears MCC has now given a clear and broad-based mandate for that internal gender equality work, and some, but not all, of the task is lodged with the Women's Concerns desk.

Another common thread running through these 30 years is that Women's Concerns has consistently provided resources for survivors of abuse and abuse prevention. The best advice I received from my predecessor was that anyone working on issues of abuse, sexual violence and professional misconduct should be sure to have a good spiritual director. Some of the hardest days for me as Women's Concerns Director occurred when I was approached with an anonymous allegation of misconduct against an unknown pastor, and then gradually came to understand that the person being accused was my pastor. Keeping my various roles clear, understanding the boundaries of confidentiality, and staying grounded in a relationship with a just and loving God were very difficult in those months.

The routine work I loved the most was planning and editing each issue of *Report*. *Report* provides a vehicle for women to tell their own stories in their own voices.

That fits one of the most basic tenets of feminist theology; our own stories are valid places to look for God at work in human history. The policy of the editors of *Women's Concerns Report* has always been to allow writers to use the language they choose to tell their own stories, to name God, to describe their relationships, and to try not to make a writer's words fit our own understanding of "feminist" or "Christian." Some of the most disillusioning struggles at this desk were times when articles for the *Report* were cut by Board decision because the content was believed to be too controversial. Those were also the times I was most impressed by the risks some upper level MCC staff were willing to take to advocate not only for a woman's right to tell her own story, but also for MCC's obligation to stand outside congregational structures and have a pastoral role on some deeply divisive issues in the church.

The stories in this issue of *Report* are reflections of some of the former Women's Concerns staff. Ted Koontz recalls the creation of the Task Force on Women in Church and Society 30 years ago. Linda Schmidt remembers just a fragment of history when she, as an administrative assistant, caught the full attention of the executive offices when she used a sort of "Emperor's New Clothes" phrase to name the structure of MCC. Emily Will and Peggy Regehr describe their shared era from their U.S. and Canadian desks, an era of painful struggle when Women's Concerns addressed some of the issues of power for women within the MCC structures and Mennonite congregations. Kathy Shantz describes many accomplishments but also a sense of battle weariness after working for the equality of women in Mennonite congregations for eight years. Eleanor Epp-Stobbe describes her eight months in which many projects were brought to completion. Finally, Beth Graybill and Kathryn Mitchell Loewen, current and recent Women's Concerns directors, describe new developments and hopes for the future of MCC Women's Concerns.

—compiled by Gwen Groff

The MCC Committees on Women's Concerns believe that all women and men are made in God's image and called to do God's work. We strive to work for the dignity and self-development of Mennonite and Brethren-in-Christ women, and to encourage wholeness and mutuality in relationships between women and men.

Articles and views presented in *Women's Concerns Report* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Committees on Women's Concerns or Mennonite Central Committee.

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Emily Will, former director of the Women's Concerns desk and writer in this issue, says, "The conundrum I have yet to satisfactorily answer is why so many Christian organizations adopt the same distribution-of-power configurations employed by secular organizations and corporations." I find this "conundrum" to be particularly challenging as well, especially since the structures of most secular organizations and corporations remain discriminatory towards the people on the "bottom" and sexist. As you will see in this issue, working towards gender mutuality at MCC has been a difficult journey. However, much progress has been made.

This issue is the first *Women's Concerns Report* I have edited. It is also the first issue of a year of issues that will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Women's Concerns desk at MCC. The first *Report* was printed in August 1973. At that time, the *Report* was titled *Report from the Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society* and was typed and photocopied, usually four times a year, with six pages of text. The stated goal for the Peace Section was that it should "include women's interests in justice and peace as part of its continuing agenda to examine attitudes, actions, and institutional structures which deny individuals their human rights, depress human potential, and spawn a domination mentality."

The writers from 1973 listed current developments regarding women in the church. One of those was a proposed discussion on "The Role of Women in the Church" at Assembly '73, a meeting of the (Old) Mennonite churches (Mennonite Church, which precedes the current Mennonite Church USA). Dorothy Nyce asked, "Does discussion of the role of *women* have acceptable validity if done predominantly by men?" The issue also focused on women's consciousness-raising groups, the use of inclusive language, gender stereotyping in Sunday School curriculum, and the employment of women in the Church.

Thirty years have passed and the structure of the *Report* has changed very little. So, we, at the Women's Concerns Desk, thought that it might be a good time to institute some changes. In this issue, you

will find a new column titled "Across the Globe." This column is similar to "News and Verbs," but "News and Verbs" will now focus on news of women from Canada and the United States while "Across the Globe" will look at news of women outside of these countries. We have also added "Church" to the title "Women in Leadership." We think "Women in Church Leadership" reflects more accurately the traditional focus of this column on women taking leadership roles in church institutions.

—Patricia Haverstick, Editor

FROM THE
editor

In Memoriam

Louise Stoltzfus, former editor of the *Women's Concerns Report*, died on November 20, 2002 after battling leukemia for three months. Louise was editor from August 1999 to June 2000. She is better known for writing about Amish and Mennonite women's experiences. Louise wrote 12 books; these include *Traces of Wisdom*, *Amish Women and the Pursuit of Life's Simple Pleasures*, *The Best of Mennonite Fellowship Meals* and *Quiet Shouts: Stories of Lancaster Mennonite Women Leaders*.

Louise was a member of Blossom Hill Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., where she served as former congregational chair, lay speaker and Sunday school teacher. Louise is survived by her friend, Jo Tyler, and her parents, four sisters, and six brothers.

In all of her writing, Louise worked towards the goal of affirming the roles Mennonite and Amish women have played in the home, in the Church, and in the community. Undoubtedly, this also played a role in the editing she did for the *Women's Concerns Report*. Iris de León-Hartshorn, Director of the Peace and Justice Ministries Program at MCC U.S., says, "Not only did Louise affirm these roles, she gave voice to the women she was writing about. She wrote and presented the stories of these women in such a way that was authentic to their experiences and gave validity to their stories. Because of this, Louise was highly respected in the communities in which she worked and lived." I never met Louise, but I got a sense of what a wonderful person she was through my co-workers who loved her. I also think this excerpt, from an article she wrote on creating sacred spaces for the first *Women's Concerns Report* she edited, paints a picture of what a wonderful and peaceful person she was. Louise said:

Beyond the rare success with the word no, I try to follow one basic principle in my personal search for quiet places. My home shall be a sacred space—a place for books and music, companions and friends, paintings and plants, rest and solitude.

Because this is the place where I go to recover, to get perspective, to feel utterly good about myself, I am thoughtful about who enters its doors . . . I do not obsess about dust mites and water spots, but I pick up clothes and newspapers, at least before I receive guests. My home is a haven of rest, a peaceful place I am glad to share with those I love.

I wish I would have been one of those people invited to rest and to spend time with Louise. My heartfelt condolences go out to Jo and Louise's other family members. We, at Women's Concerns Desk and Peace and Justice Ministries of MCC U.S., wish to place blessings upon all of those who are grieving the loss of a wonderful woman named Louise.

—respectfully submitted by Patricia Haverstick, Editor

Beginnings

by Ted Koontz

Ted Koontz is professor of ethics and peace studies at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana. Ted and Gayle have three children in high school and college. In addition to four years at MCC offices in Akron, they have served with MCC in the Philippines (1988–1990) and in Africa for short-term assignments.

This ad hoc gathering had no official standing, but some younger women who had been exposed in various ways to “women’s liberation” attended and helped generate enthusiasm for this part of MCC’s work, and an orientation towards the issues that charted the direction for the Task Force for some years.

It is hard to believe that 30 years have passed since the “MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society” was formed. But it is that long, and I write based on a rather hazy memory. Anyone interested in the facts, instead of my impressions, should consult the archives!

The beginning of the Task Force occurred in the context of a wider societal shift in understandings of women and their “place,” which I elaborate on below. Focusing specifically on the Peace Section for the moment, the major support for an initiative on women and their role in church and society—seen as a peace and justice issue instead of a family issue—came from the Peace Section Board, not staff, and particularly from Dorothy Yoder Nyce.

At that time, the women’s organizations of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church were officially represented on the Peace Section Board. Dorothy represented the Mennonite Church women’s group and Laura Oyer represented the General Conference women’s group. I believe they were the only two women on the Peace Section Board and staff (except for secretaries who were not included in substantive discussions). As I recall, Dorothy, with Laura’s gentle and quiet but strong support, made the case before the Board for including justice for women (although I don’t know if we used that language) as a legitimate priority within the Peace Section’s peace and justice mandate. I don’t remember any substantial opposition to this idea, although I doubt that anyone really understood what this would mean and become. My memory is that I was assigned to add this portfolio to the other tasks I was carrying, with the understanding that it would involve marginal staff time. I think this was done for two main reasons: first, I was the junior member of the administrative staff, and second, I was open to doing it and sympathetic to the cause. I believe that Dorothy and others were also committed to giving significant

volunteer time to the development of the Task Force.

There was relatively little clarity, at least in my mind, about just what the Task Force would be and do. One of the first things we did in order to generate interest in the Task Force and focus its work was to hold an ad hoc meeting of persons interested in this agenda. It was held at the YMCA hotel in Chicago and was an “add-on” to a Peace Assembly meeting. These Assemblies were sponsored periodically by the Peace Section and were open to any MCC constituents, but especially appealed to younger people and those on the more activist edge of the church. This ad hoc gathering had no official standing, but some younger women who had been exposed in various ways to “women’s liberation” (I remember particularly my wife Gayle Gerber Koontz and our friend Dorothy Nickel Friesen but many others were involved as well) attended and helped generate enthusiasm for this part of MCC’s work, and an orientation towards the issues that charted the direction for the Task Force for some years.

I mentioned earlier the larger societal context out of which the Task Force emerged and my own sympathetic response to the concern for justice for women. Perhaps a word about my experience, largely through Gayle’s experience, will illustrate the context and help explain my sympathy. Before coming to MCC, we lived in Boston for three years. While there, Gayle took courses with Mary Daly, who at that time was on the cutting edge of Christian feminist thought. I received a substantial, though secondhand and free, feminist education in those years. And while I remained seated in Harvard Memorial Church when Mary Daly led scores of women out the church’s door in an exodus from the patriarchal Christian tradition, I had come to see the rightness of many feminist perspectives and concerns. While this was often not comfortable (i.e., dividing all household tasks equally) and while I often went along grudgingly, I found I could muster no strong theological or moral argument in favor of male privilege.

It could be the case that my being a man as the staff person responsible for women's concerns in the early years was marginally helpful in legitimizing this addition to the Peace Section's work. At the same time, I was young and low on the totem pole. I suspect it might have been more important that there was someone (woman or man) on the staff who was sympathetic to the concern and willing to help birth a new initiative. In any case, from the beginning it seemed evident to me that women should take primary leadership in the Task Force. I have felt the same about other marginalized groups, such as people who live in oppressive, formerly colonized societies and African Americans in our own country. Perhaps nothing is more essential in overcoming oppression or marginalization than for people from marginalized groups

to demonstrate their leadership capabilities and thus to demolish stereotypes and prejudices that persons of other groups hold of them, and to build strength and confidence in themselves and others of their own group. This does not mean, of course, that there is no place for me and others like me who come from privileged groups. I believe, however, that the role of people from privileged groups is primarily one of encouragement, support and "blessing" for those emerging from oppressed groups to take the risks of leadership.

It has been a delight to watch the Task Force (and the perspectives and concerns that it represented) grow and mature over the decades. I'm glad to have been a part of it. ♦



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Thinking back

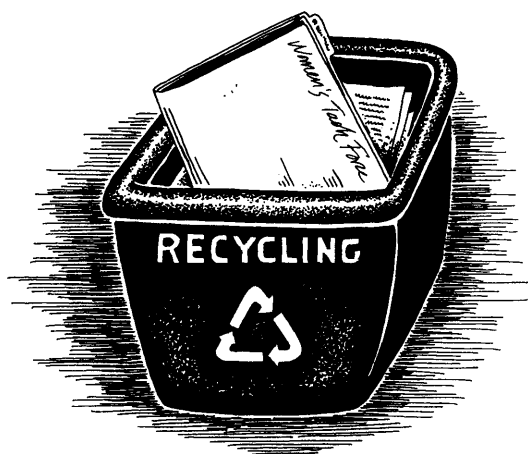
by Linda Schmidt

After working for MCC, Linda Schmidt attended Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pennsylvania and has been an ordained United Church of Christ minister since 1990, pastoring a church in Pennsylvania and in Iowa.

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It never fails; only a few months ago I needed to clean out files and reorganize my office. One of the files I sent to recycle was the file of old “Women’s Task Force Reports.” Since I hadn’t even looked at that file for at least ten years, I was certain I would not have a use for it in the future. Now I have to rely on my memory alone!

I served as an administrative assistant volunteer in the Peace Section offices in Akron for two terms: once after graduating from Bethel College, 1977–1979, and again from 1982–1984; sandwiching a



stint with MCC in New Orleans, Louisiana. During both terms I did staff work for the Women’s Concerns portfolio. I recall the exacting efforts of Dorothy Yoder Nyce and Muriel Thiessen Stackley as *Report* editors. Between 1982 and 1984, the “Task Force on Women” became an ongoing “Committee on Women’s Concerns” at MCC. My job title remained “administrative assistant” even though I devoted up to half time on women’s issues.

I have one quick story to share. After I presented a report on the progress of women in MCC, especially regarding obtaining leadership roles, the MCC Executive Secretary called me into his office. The MCC U.S. Executive also paid me a visit. I had used the phrase “benevolent patriarchy” to describe the status quo of the organization, and that struck a nerve with the Executives. At the time, men held all the top-level administrative positions. ♦

A letter to friends

by Peggy Unruh Regehr

Peggy Unruh Regehr is a former missionaries’ kid who is retired and enjoying life at home. She and Walter have three adult children and five grandchildren. They worship at River East Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where she has been involved in various church ministries. She is currently working, with other relatives, on her Unruh genealogy for publication sometime in 2003.

I was asked to tell something about my time with MCC Canada as Director of Women’s Concerns. This has been hard for me to do since there were both good and very difficult experiences, and I could not write about one without the other. I hope no one minds if I elaborate a bit about them in this letter.

I began with MCC Canada at age 56 after having spent most of my years at home. I was a strong feminist and a proponent of women’s issues in the home, church and

society. I thought that I had a unique perspective to bring to the program. But I could not have perceived then just how difficult, but also rewarding, this task might be.

First let me mention the good things. And yes, there were lots of them. My experiences with women themselves were very positive. While women had various opinions about the issues that affected their lives, they were often glad I was there, ready to address their issues and concerns. I visited with many of them personally. I also had frequent opportunities to speak

to women's groups both in Manitoba and the rest of the country, and I enjoyed my interactions with them more than I could have imagined. Those times were always highlights for me.

I had a wonderful Women's Concerns committee to work with. The members of both the Canadian committee and the bi-national committee were a joy to meet with at our semi-annual meetings. We dealt with so many important issues, and the committee was always a support for me through so many of the difficult times. I especially appreciated working with Emily Will as my U.S. counterpart. There was great strength in her.

Also meaningful for me was the work I did on the Domestic Violence Task Force, the Purple Packet, and other resources we developed. Abuse of women was a new field for me, one that became a major focus of my work after taking a five-day workshop with Marie Fortune. It did not take long for me to find women who had experienced abuse. They came from within MCC Canada's female staff as well as from the community at large. I began to make this one of the priority issues that I worked with and spoke about in the constituency, in spite of the fact that some Board members and staff were not always supportive.

Then there was that other side of the work. I soon realized that there was not always a great deal of support for Women's Concerns—either within the constituency, on MCC Canada's Board, or among some staff at MCC Canada. I found myself ruffling feathers in a host of ways and for a number of people. This organization, which I assumed to be concerned for those who were marginalized, was often not as caring as I had hoped. And so I found myself fighting battles with those I thought would be supportive of the work I was doing.

My first real sense of MCC bureaucracy came within the first months of my work. It had to do with the "Body Image" issue of *Women's Concerns Report*. I was shocked by both the need to censor that issue by "higher ups" in Akron and by the difficulty Emily faced.

But that was only the beginning. As I began to bring up equality issues about women in the workplace (both in terms of position and salary/voluntary service), about Canadian Aboriginal women, about abused women, about abortion, and many other such issues, there was almost always some stonewalling from some sector within MCC Canada.

The Women's Concerns staff person was the only one within Canadian Programs that was not directly responsible to the Canadian Program director, but rather to Peace and Social Concerns (PSC). The co-directors of PSC were my staunchest supporters and were instrumental in finally having Women's Concerns on an equal status with the others within Canadian Programs.

I also felt that Women's Concerns directors should receive a salary after two years of voluntary service, just as other people (men) did at the level I began at. But I was told I did not need a salary since I had a husband to support me. I asked for mediation but was only offered arbitration. This was finally successful, and I was finally given a salary, but only for the last few months before I was released from my position.

Several times the women within the MCC Canada office responded to issues facing MCC Canada. One of those was the commission on restructuring the classification of positions at MCC. As women, we were quite vocal about the continued male hierarchy proposed by the plan called the Hays classification system. But our voices were disregarded.

Later we were specifically asked to prepare a statement to the constituency after the Canadian Supreme Court had ruled that abortion was legal. But our perspectives were ignored and the MCC Canada Ottawa office was called on to rewrite it. Our perspective was that if we wanted to be against abortion, we needed to begin addressing the issues around women's lives that so often led to unwanted pregnancies. In the end, it was not our statement anymore. It felt to us that our views were only welcome if they met what was considered politically correct by MCC Canada. This was a great disappointment to us.

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Through all of this I continued to work hard at issues that affected women's lives. But in the end it was not enough. I was told, after a badly conducted evaluation, that my contract would be terminated. No reasons were given. Nor was there anything in my evaluation that should have triggered a termination. By now I was just too tired to go through a grievance procedure. I just told them that, with Emily's leaving from Akron, it would be better for me to continue a few months longer as part of a transition. That was granted to me.

In March 1989, it was my turn to lead our weekly chapel on the last day I was with MCC Canada. It was the Wednesday after Easter. I used the theme of moving from the pain and hopelessness of Good Friday

to the joy and hope of Easter. For me it was still Good Friday, but I hoped Easter would come again. That was 13 years ago. But periodically, over the last years, that Good Friday feeling has been back more frequently as I've struggled through depression. And even now, I find it difficult to write about this. Yet there have also been really good times since then.

I treasure my time with MCC Canada in a weird kind of way. It gave me first-hand knowledge of what women face almost daily in so many aspects of their lives. My hat goes off to women in all walks of life—whether in the work force, in volunteering, or in the home. I treasure you all and consider you my friends. I wish you all well in your own continuing journeys.

My love, and God's blessings, to you all. ♦

Witnessing “natural” abuses of power

by Emily Will

Emily Will is currently working on a master's in Latin American Studies—course work requiring much thought on the use and abuse of power—at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

Power: its use and abuse.” This was the issue that occasioned the most pondering for me during my four years as Women’s Concerns coordinator. Power is a vital and relevant concern for any group or organization aspiring to Christ-like behavior. Jesus’ use of power was so strikingly unique as to be nearly inconceivable to his first followers.

Jesus could have deployed immense worldly power to control others for his own purposes. Instead he not only rejected such abuse of power but also fell victim to it in order to demonstrate the nature of God’s “upside-down kingdom,” as Donald B. Kraybill termed it in his book by that title. When Jesus did use his wealth of power in leadership, compassion and healing, he did so to empower society’s weak and marginalized, including women.

The conundrum I have yet to satisfactorily answer is why so many Christian organizations adopt (often without question) the same distribution-of-power configurations employed by secular organizations and corporations. While MCC intentionally tries to empower its overseas partners (recognizing this as an integral part of its mission), the organization remains an entrenched hierarchy at headquarters.

During my time in the Women’s Concerns “hot seat,” MCC adopted the Hays classification system to organize its hierarchy. The Hays system is widely used in the corporate arena. At MCC, this organizational model was adopted despite determined opposition from many staff “levels.” The opposition went unheeded (Hays is still in use some 18 years later) except for one alteration that held symbolic meaning at best. At worst, it was a sorry attempt to camouflage the extent of the hierarchy. The concession was to designate no one at the “A,” or lowest level. Designating the lowest tier as “B” may have helped

salvage a shred of self-dignity among those at the pyramid’s base, but it did not change the fact that “if it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck. . .”

I witnessed “natural” abuses of power that come with a hierarchy, especially one dominated by white men with well-developed egos, high educational levels, and high visibility within a relatively small ethnic community. The abuse may not have been intentional; it may have occurred due to the nature of the structural “beast.” In any case, I observed several ways that top administrators, knowingly or not, preserved the status quo, as follows:

1. *Marginalize.* This is most frequently accomplished by naming. The position I agreed to fill was labeled “administrative assistant” although the job description listed only specific programmatic duties that were unrelated to assisting an administrator. As I made get-acquainted rounds in my new job, a senior administrator told me, as if imparting fatherly advice, that I would do best to limit my interaction to other administrative assistants, that is, to other (disempowered) women at my “level.” This administrator’s crystal-clear message was one of the first warning signs regarding the position I had so ignorantly walked into. Fortunately, the department head backed my request for the more accurate job title of “Women’s Concerns Coordinator.” The new name likely did nothing to change the organization’s marginalization of women’s issues, but it provided a certain amount of freedom to think and act beyond the restrictive confines governing the scope and realm of administrative assistants’ activities and interactions at that time.

2. *Redefine and recast suggestions that would lead to greater staff participation in decision-making.* Yes, we’ll adopt a Headquarters Council of staff people. But this council will only gather staff opinions on policies, and its link to the Executive

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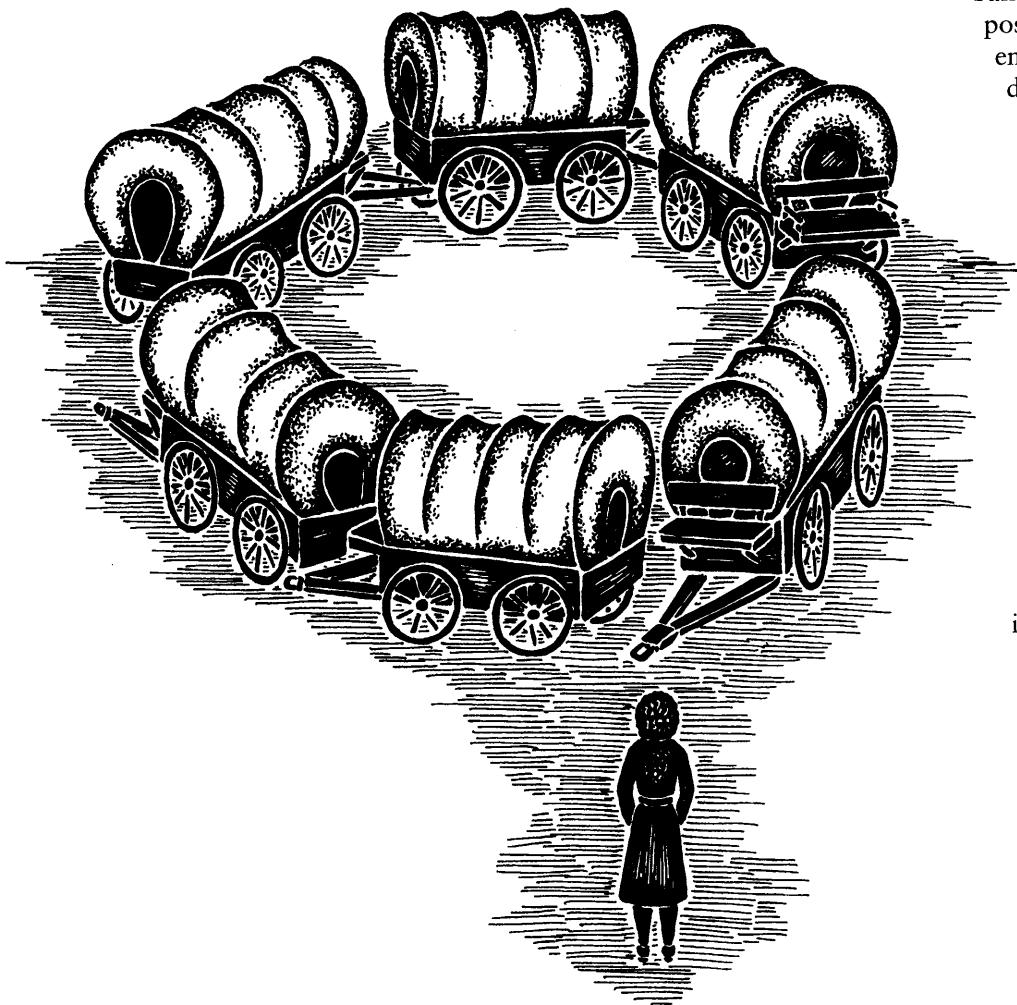
Board will be via a top administrator who will chair the council. This council will, however, have wide scope to plan headquarters' picnics, make suggestions for staff development (courses, training, etc.), and decide upon such vital policy decisions as to whether one day per year should be designated a "work day," with staff working at "hands-on" sites, such as the Material Resources Center. And yes, we will develop a system to address staff grievances. However, it will not involve any Board members or neutral outsiders with power to make a final determination. Staff will designate other staff to become listening ears in times of conflict and make suggestions for change, which may or may not be heeded.

3. *Circle the wagons.* By design, hierarchies operate so that upper-echelon decision-makers rally around one another, effectively shutting out concerns from

below. In one particular case, had upper-level administrators listened to an administrative assistant (and asked questions of the administrative assistant who had earlier vacated the position), they would have prevented a great waste of money and massive disaffection within a certain program's personnel. That this sad sequence of events occurred, despite active advocacy efforts to allow the lower-level employee to be heard (and believed), reveals just how fervent the impulse of a hierarchy's upper leaders to rally around their own is a powerful means of silencing others—no matter how legitimate their grievances.

4. *Rally the opposition.* A proposal is made to include a day-care center in the architectural plans for a new MCC building. We will call a meeting to allow for maximum staff input. But who says the meeting needs to be representative? Let's pack it with opposition, even from non-staff, including stay-at-home wives whose "servanthood" has allowed their husbands to attain high administrative positions (and who feel highly threatened by a proposal that challenges the decisions they've made). And while we're at it, we'll make sure to invite some singles who are rabid at the thought of any additional benefits aimed exclusively at families or single parents with children.

Did Jesus face the tactics of powerful people as he defined a new way of relating in God's kingdom? This is, of course, a rhetorical question. One way to prevent abuse of power may be to try to bring about a system that occasions a better distribution of power. Whether MCC will ever deem this endeavor worthy of its time and effort is yet to be seen. ♦



Was it me or our mandate?

Reflecting on my years spent as MCC Canada Women's Concerns director has turned out to be more challenging than I thought. It's been five years since I left the position, and as I look back I sometimes think maybe it was all a dream or maybe a nightmare, depending on my frame of mind. Perhaps the most dominant sentiment is one of incredulity: Did I really do that? Was I crazy enough to put my head in the jaws of a lion?

Actually, with five years of perspective, I realize that I wasn't crazy. It was the mandate of the Women's Concerns that was crazy. We were to work toward the full inclusion of women in the church. We were to take the Galatians 3:28 passage seriously, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ."

The problem was we were going to have to reverse centuries of tradition in a church that emphasized female submission to male authority. And this was not just any church. This was a church that seemed historically unable to integrate change. The Mennonite Church really wasn't a denomination in the usual sense; it was a collection of many splinter groups, each having at some point in history gone off to form its own special group with its own corner of Scripture-based truth.

Mennonite Central Committee brought many of the disparate groups together to work on the common cause of relief and development. This was something most Mennonites could agree on. The submissive status of women in the church was also something these groups were equally united in. When I arrived on the scene, only two of the participating groups allowed for ordination of women (Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church). MCC Canada's administrative and governing structure

reflected this submissive status. To attempt to work toward full inclusion of women in this kind of setting seemed like sheer lunacy.

Still, looking back over the eight years that I served as director, I do feel some sense of achievement amidst the insanity. Several highlights come quickly to mind. Working with the women on the national Committee on Women's Concerns and

by Kathy Shantz

Kathy Shantz lives with her spouse Reg Good and two children Rachel and Daniel. For the past three years, she has worked as a land claims researcher for the Chippewas of Newash and Saugeen First Nations. She also works part time for Mennonite Publishing House. She enjoys bicycling, cooking and going to movies with subtitles.



Mennonite Central Committee brought many of the disparate groups together to work on the common cause of relief and development. This was something most Mennonites could agree on. The submissive status of women in the church was also something these groups were equally united in.

helping to nurture provincial committees was a wonderful experience. I am still amazed at the strength and commitment of these women. The women on the national Committee were instrumental in building provincial networks. It was the emergence of provincial committees that gave the resource-starved national program both visibility and viability.

Working with my U.S. counterpart in Women's Concerns was a source of inspiration and comfort. I really enjoyed collaborating on theme development and recruiting writers for *Women's Concerns Report*. It was also very reassuring to know that there was someone else within the MCC organization who shared the same struggles as I did.

Producing a worship resource on violence and sexual abuse was another highlight. I was surprised at the positive reception of *Lord, Hear Our Prayers*. It went through several reprints, and even now I receive occasional inquiries about the resource. It was gratifying to realize that this resource may have helped in the healing journey of some survivors. Much of the work that I did on violence and sexual abuse seemed so dark and hopeless and this was one glimmer of light.

Coordinating MCC Canada's submission to the Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies was a great learning experience. I felt completely overwhelmed by the complexity of the issues but was able to form a committee of highly informed constituents who produced a thoughtful document. The Canadian government is only now getting around to adopting some of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission.

Without a doubt, the happiest memory was helping to birth the first Women Doing Theology conference that took place in Waterloo, Ontario, in 1992. How audacious we all were, as I look back now. Since when does anyone "do" theology, and since when can lay people, let alone women, come to a conference and call it a theology conference? After all, we did not invite any of the official church theologians to be presenters at the conference.

But it was evident by the overwhelming number of participants that this grassroots vision had touched a deep seated need. Being at the conference felt like what I imagine Pentecost to have been. It was brimming with energy, hopefulness and audacity—in short, creative chaos! It is wonderful to realize that this conference has become a more or less regular event. It may have lost some of its more radical edge, but it continues to be a forum for women and men to come together to re-imagine and re-image God.

These are just a few of the highlights. There were certainly many low points. Probably the single most difficult challenge was trying to work at structural change. As long as Women's Concerns contented itself with doing things for women around the edges, things were fine. But as soon as it actually tried to advocate for women in leadership, and for partnership with men both within MCC and within the constituent churches, there was firm resistance. The struggle to have more women present on MCC Boards and in administrative positions was demoralizing to say the least. I participated on a committee on leadership within MCC and, quite frankly, I don't think real change happened until Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) did a review of MCC Canada. In that review, MCC Canada was sharply criticized for the lack of women in leadership roles. This would not be the first or last time that government policy dictated the agenda for MCC Canada, but it was certainly one of the more ironic examples.

The most difficult challenge was trying to work for change in the constituent churches. This agenda was very controversial. Often it was argued that MCC had no right to interfere in matters of theology, and ordination of women was considered a theological issue. To me this was a spurious argument because there were numerous other examples of MCC interference in theological issues. Peace theology was the most prominent example. But this issue carried true risk for Women's Concerns. In fact, I believe that Peggy Regehr, my predecessor, was fired because she worked so diligently at this issue. I worked as best I could at this agenda but

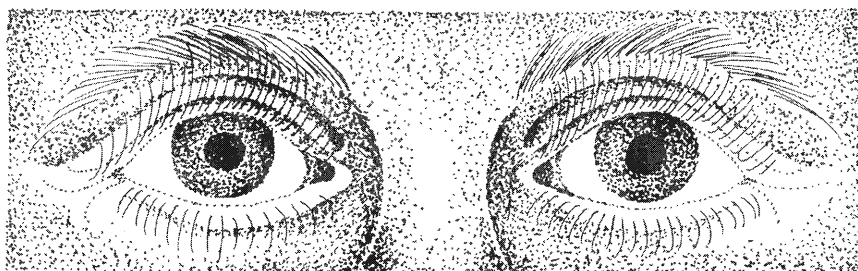
it was always in the shadow of what happened to Peggy. It remains to this day an unfinished agenda.

By 1997, when I left the position, I was truly battle weary. It was not easy working in an environment that was often hostile to the very existence of Women's Concerns. I wish I would have kept a record of all the misogynist comments that were directed at me personally and at the

program. It's actually quite amazing that I was able to survive for as long as I did and that it has not done me any lasting harm. I was fortunate in having a network of friends outside the church who helped me maintain perspective.

Would I do it over again? Would I recommend the job to my friends or maybe my enemies? Do fools go where angels fear to tread? ♦

Without a doubt, the happiest memory was helping to birth the first Women Doing Theology conference that took place in Waterloo, Ontario, in 1992.



Through the eyes of a woman

My work at MCC Canada as Women's Concerns coordinator was bookended with gifts of beautiful pieces of art. Within the first month of my taking the coordinator position, a coworker gave me a beautiful, life-affirming art piece; an embroidered Arpillera titled "Through the eyes of a woman." I then received, from an ecumenical project I worked with in the last few months of my work assignment with MCC, a remarkable art piece in the form of poetry by Regina Coupar. It states:

I have been
ordained by God
to see through
a woman's
eyes
to hear through
a woman's
ears
and to speak the
Truth
in a woman's
voice.

Honoring women's ways of doing, thinking and responding was significant to my work and presence with MCC in the position of Women's Concerns coordinator from January through August 1998.

I began this work in the midst of an MCC Canada restructuring process that held pain and promise. There were a number of new staff in the MCC Canada Peace and Justice department, and I fondly remember the occasions for relationship building with coworkers. There was a growing spirit of collegiality, cooperation and mutual respect that was fostered in our relations with one another. Yet there lingered a sense of tension, of an unfinished or incomplete aspect to the forming of Canadian programs. However, I soon chose to pour myself into connecting with the women at a local level in the various Canadian contexts.

Upon reflection, my work moved in the areas of networking, resourcing and empowerment. During my service with MCC, there were a number of provinces and regions in MCC Canada that had staff persons working in Women's Concerns as

by Eleanor Epp-Stobbe

Eleanor Epp-Stobbe serves with MCC Manitoba as Voices for Non-Violence Coordinator.

During my service with MCC, there were a number of provinces and regions in MCC Canada that had staff persons working in Women's Concerns as well as dedicated volunteers committed to the vision of Women's Concerns. It was a privilege to relate with these women, from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, who were spirited women providing leadership at a local level.

The contributions of Mennonite women to *Spirit Mourn, Spirit Dance* was overwhelming, particularly since most Mennonite churches did not recognize the World Council of Churches Decade for Women.

well as dedicated volunteers committed to the vision of Women's Concerns. It was a privilege to relate with these women, from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, who were spirited women providing leadership at a local level. I appreciated their patience as I listened and learned from them about the needs in their area, and the history and hopes for the present and future as it related to the lives of women. We networked by phone, email, newsletter and joyfully met together as a group of MCC Canada Women's Concerns Network in the spring of 1998. These were creative, energetic and visionary working sessions. It was also a celebration of the launch of *Piecework: a women's peace theology*, a new MCC publication that was birthed by MCC Canada's Women's Concerns and Peace desks. Being able to meet one another in person—to laugh, struggle, pray and dream—was vital for our own nurture and fostering our relationships that would make our ongoing long distance communication that much easier.

During this brief time, there were some exciting occasions for making connections and supporting women on matters of the heart. MCC Canada Women's Concerns promoted the Mennonite Women Doing Theology conference in Kansas. The World March for Women was a tremendous ecumenical feminist networking opportunity for women across Canada. The two aims of the March—addressing the issues of violence against women and poverty and women—were commitments that Women's Concerns also shared. I was fortunate to also become part of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, an ecumenical feminist Canadian women's group with 16 Christian denominations represented from British Columbia to Newfoundland. The national ecumenical women's networks were very satisfying, fostering delightful friendships as well as providing Women's Concerns with new resources, expanded support for our work, and a shared passion for the voices of women to be celebrated. Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada sponsored a national ecumenical feminist gathering "Daring Hope" that Women's Concerns promoted and encouraged.

Women's Concerns has a rich history of providing resources in response to women's needs. A few such resources were being developed, and I was honored to be able to nurture them to completion. In addition to *Piecework*, *Women and Men: Gender in the Church* was another project that was launched and celebrated. Resources were shared from the March for Women. Also shared was an ecumenical project *Spirit Mourn, Spirit Dance: Wisdom for the Decade and Beyond* that marked the end of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, from 1988–1998. The contributions of Mennonite women to *Spirit Mourn, Spirit Dance* was overwhelming, particularly since most Mennonite churches did not recognize the World Council of Churches Decade for Women. Materials focusing on violence against women and promoting effective transformative responses, with the intention of developing a booklet format for church use, were commissioned.

Another role Women's Concerns played was part of the MCC Canada Board gender analysis, meeting for discussions with the women Board members as well as the larger Board. Some excellent observations and recommendations were made, with some being implemented. I appreciated the responsibility of representing MCC Canada to the Conference of Mennonites in Canada annual sessions in Ontario. The projects, conferences, communication, meetings, meetings, and more meetings, but most of all the amazing people I was privileged to encounter on this journey empowered me. The network of women in the MCC constituency, the women working for change in our Canadian context, and the global women's voices were and continue to be a source of wisdom and spiritual empowerment for me. ♦

Putting your energy behind what you hold sacred

Taped to the front of my computer is this quote, my personal guiding light from Starhawk, who is a spiritual writer, feminist, and author of (among other books) *The Spiral Dance*: "Decide what is sacred to you and put your best life energies at its service. Make that the focus of your studies, your work, your relationships. Don't ever let fear or craving for security turn you aside."

In 1999 I was thrilled to be hired at the MCC U.S. Women's Concerns desk to do work that seemed to complement my academic work in Women's Studies, and that I cared personally about as a survivor of sexual abuse and assault. Beginning with my tenure, the Women's Concerns staff position was increased to one full-time equivalent, divided between a half-time newsletter editor and a half-time director (me), an enviable situation compared to the workload my predecessors shouldered single-handedly.

I inherited much good work from the women who had gone before me: a good track record of timely and well-written newsletter issues, a history of introducing gender as a development issue in MCC orientations for new volunteers, a strong abuse prevention program that included regular mailings to the Network of Adult Survivors and a strong collection of educational materials, to which we have added a new packet on overcoming pornography and another on abuse prevention guidelines for congregations. By way of educational materials on other topics, Debra Gingerich (former *Women's Concerns Report* editor) drafted and saw through to approval a statement on abortion and the updating of our abortion packet.

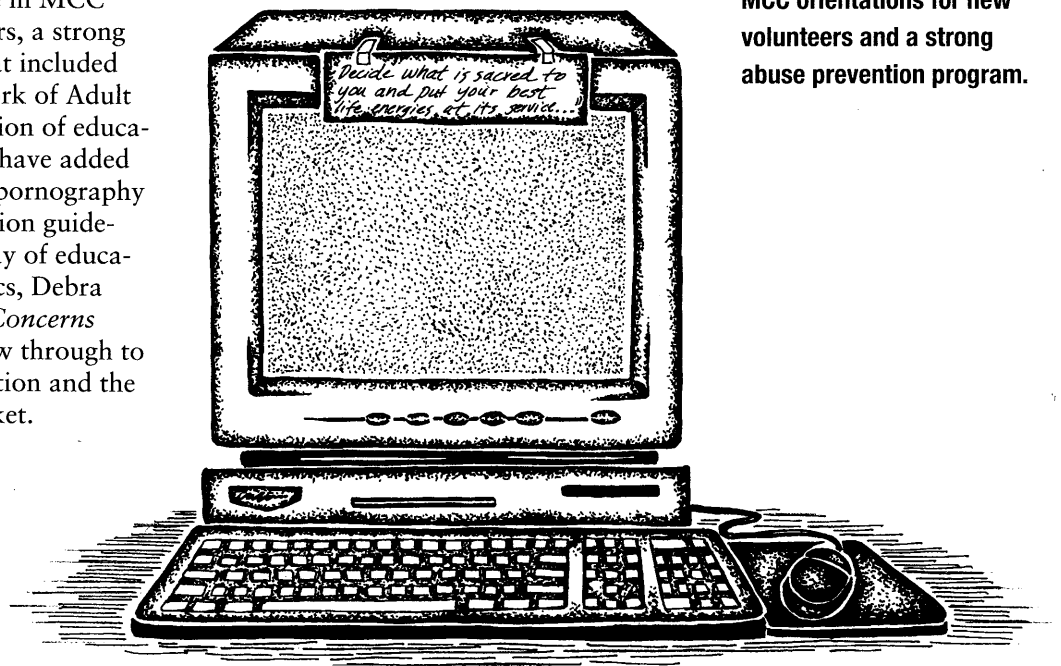
The biggest highlight of my tenure to date has been the Prevencion de la Violencia Familiar conference on abuse prevention that I organized in May of 2001, which was attended by 90 Hispanic leaders. In planning this Spanish-language conference, I was delighted to work closely with Ely Soto (former member of our advisory Committee on Women's Concerns and now a church worker in Columbia), without whose expertise and networking the conference would never have taken place. As a result of that workshop, we continue to compile and translate additional educational materials on abuse prevention in Spanish and follow-up conferences have taken place in several MCC regions.

In an interesting twist of fate, soon after I took the MCC job, I found myself on the accountability team to address the behavior of the perpetrator and pastor whose victim had been helped, by the previous Women's Concerns director, to file charges against him. As I reflected on this, I found it ironically appropriate that

by Beth Graybill

Beth Graybill is the Director of MCC U.S. Women's Concerns and a wife and mother. She and her family live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and attend Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster.

I inherited much good work from the women who had gone before me: a good track record of timely and well-written newsletter issues, a history of introducing gender as a development issue in MCC orientations for new volunteers and a strong abuse prevention program.



As I reflect on issues of sexual abuse and harassment, I am reminded of a comment by a friend to the effect that the Church should not just be punishing the perpetrators but should also be involved in teaching young women to resist.

Women's Concerns staff would fill both those roles.

Today I find that my desk receives relatively few calls for assistance in processing charges of pastoral sexual misconduct. I like to believe that this is because Mennonite and Brethren in Christ conferences now have clear policies to follow, but it may also be an example of compassion fatigue around this issue. During my tenure, our desk has given input into the now-approved Mennonite Church U.S.A. guidelines for handling allegations of pastoral sexual misconduct, and the pending guidelines for the accountability process for offending pastors. Unfortunately, most such accountability processes fail, as did the one in which I was involved. To me, this is a tragedy, since many offenders go on to continue at-risk ministry in other denominations. Far better would be an accountability process that offers offending pastors enough tough-love support for them to do the difficult and remedial work of repentance, critical analysis of past failures, moral inventory and, when appropriate, restoration to Mennonite or Brethren in Christ ministry.

At the Women's Concerns desk, we have recently been more involved in helping to give input into MCC policies guarding against sexual harassment, developing a session for MCC orientees on coping with harassment on assignment, and serving as advocate for a complainant in a case of sexual harassment at a nearby Mennonite institution.

As I reflect on issues of sexual abuse and harassment, I am reminded of a comment by a friend to the effect that the Church should not just be punishing the perpetrators but should also be involved in teaching young women to resist. What are the factors that keep us quiet and acquiescent in the face of sexual misconduct? The answer, of course, is abuse of power, and the great difficulty in saying no to sexual improprieties by powerful religious figures. I find it ironic that despite our his-

tory of "priesthood of believers," Anabaptist churches maintain such hierarchical traditions that can foster abuse of power.

Promoting women's resistance needs to be accomplished. An earlier issue of this newsletter, which tried to move us toward an Anabaptist theology opposing violence against women, may be a way to begin. Revising our peace theology to include resisting evil (including that of sexual abuse and misconduct) may be an important way to work at legitimizing women's ability to resist abuses of power.

Part of the sacred task (a la Starhawk) yet to be completed at Women's Concerns, for which I have energy, is what we are calling the work of anti-sexism. Many of us grew up believing that physical attractiveness, marriage and children are the highest goals. While these are all good things, women could also benefit from the more normative messages given to men: seeing the self as intelligent, capable, smart, strong and courageous (As Judge Judy Sheindlin titled her book, *Beauty Fades, but Dumb is Forever*). Thanks in part to the efforts of Moniqua Acosta, who completed an interim nine-month assignment while I was on educational leave, we have begun this new focus, which seeks to address the following questions: how do we work at identifying and eliminating sexist attitudes (both inside ourselves and in society) and sexist actions that disadvantage women in relation to men? How do we confront the internalized sexism that separates us from other women (either through feelings of inferiority or superiority, and the accompanying isolation, division and gossiping)? And ultimately, how do we become better allies to ourselves, to other women and to men? This seems to me to be the unfinished agenda still before us as Mennonite and Brethren in Christ women. ♦

Still much to do

by Kathryn Mitchell Loewen

Kathryn Mitchell Loewen lives together with her spouse, Russell, and their four children in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Her job with MCC Canada finished at the end of August 2002. She looks forward to continuing to work against injustice and those issues that continue to affect women and girls.

The summer has passed quickly and with it the end of my three years of working with MCC Canada Women's Concerns. I have mixed feelings about leaving with so many things to do. However, the call to care for family was strong. We have four children, ages 9 to 17, and I face the pull between career and family.

For some time it worked to mix family and career, but changes at home have shown the need to be more available to family. It seems women have struggled forever to have their work and worth recognized by society. As a person who chose to stay at home with family and volunteer for 15 years, I often struggled with feelings of worth. The Women's Concerns program addresses areas where women have been oppressed or disempowered. After beginning with MCC, I quickly realized that there was much to do and not enough time in my day to accomplish everything.

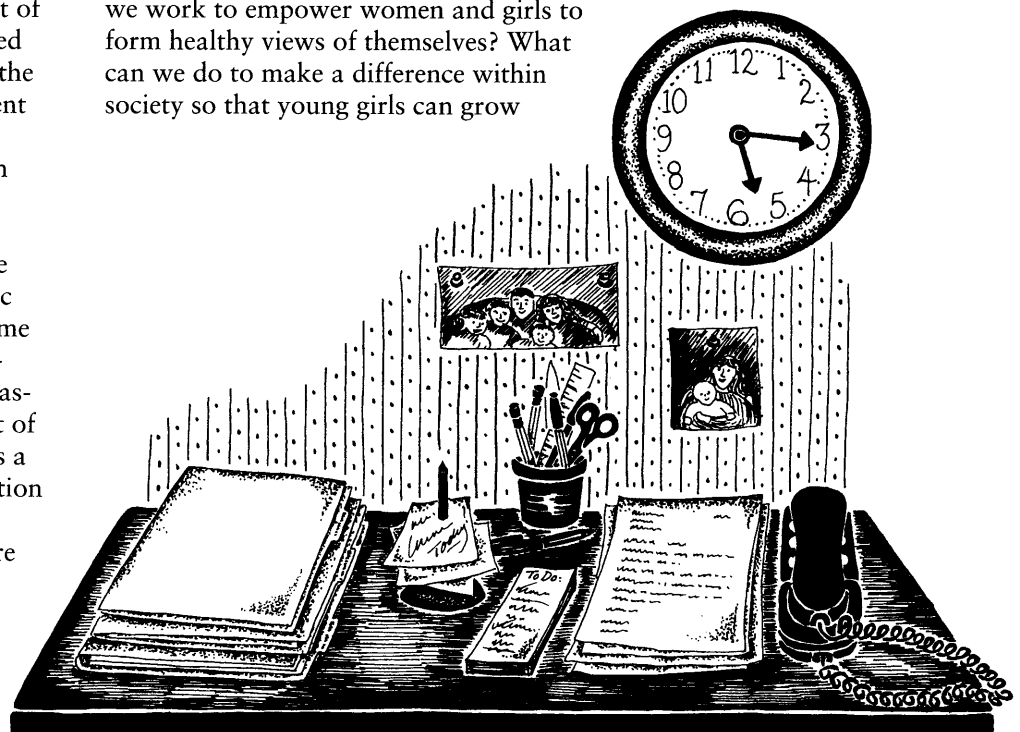
When I started this position, I was approached by people who said they were pleased that there was someone to finally do this work as they had information to pass on to me. Those first days were almost overwhelming, and the amount of pain was evident. Several people related stories of pastoral misconduct within the Mennonite Church. With the movement of Voices for Non-Violence to MCC Manitoba, the formation of the British Columbia Domestic Violence Sexual Abuse program and the interest in women's issues in Eastern Canada, the number of individual cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse referred to me has dropped. Reports of domestic violence, sexual abuse, harassment and pastoral misconduct continue to be a part of the work in those areas where abuse is a focus. People are still seeking information so MCC Canada Women's Concerns, provincial programs and MCC U.S. are working to put our information on the Web. We hope within six months we will have developed a fairly comprehensive site on sexual abuse and domestic violence

that will allow for updates and new information. This will undoubtedly make information more readily available to those who need it. Work has also been done to translate some of the material from MCC's abuse packets into French for accessibility to MCC's Francophone programs.

In everyday life, I am constantly reminded how important this work is. A few weeks ago I took my 9-year-old daughter and her friend to a children's movie in the afternoon and was shocked at the first advertisement to come up on the screen. I walked out to find the manager to file a complaint. The ad was selling a new brand of scent for men that would make men irresistible to women. To sell the product, the man proceeded to stumble upon a group of scantily clad "cave" women and saved them from a two-headed monster. His inspiration, breasts!

This past week I spoke with a woman about the devastating effects of anorexia. She shared with me a little of her work as a hospital chaplain and the numbers of young Mennonite women she encountered suffering with eating disorders. How can we work to empower women and girls to form healthy views of themselves? What can we do to make a difference within society so that young girls can grow

The Women's Concerns program addresses areas where women have been oppressed or disempowered. After beginning with MCC, I quickly realized that there was much to do and not enough time in my day to accomplish everything.



"Women know what they want and think. They are not doormats . . . A woman may keep quiet but she will burst and talk one day. When she does people will say, 'She's right, she has tolerated it for a long time.'"

up strong and be able to use their voices to speak out about those things that are hurtful?

It has been exciting to be a part of the Women's Concerns network and listen to women's voices. I was fortunate to coordinate discussions within Women's Concerns that led to a presentation last fall to the MCC Canada Board. At those meetings, the Board accepted a recommendation to draft policy on gender that will speak to both governance and structure; and the development, monitoring and evaluation of programs in Canada. It will also address the process of developing organizational tools and training, orientation, and development for staff. This shows a commitment by MCC Canada to gender issues.

Even though my three years with MCC has finished, I know that the work to address issues for women has not. The work begun 30 years ago continues and is

still relevant today. Injustices still happen. Women and girls continue to be abused physically and mentally.

But there is hope. One of the very exciting projects I participated in was the publication of *Peace Is: Women Imagine a Peaceful World* by Jennifer deGroot. We are already on our second printing and proceeds from sales go back into women's programs. As Eunice Oyet, one of the women interviewed said, "Women know what they want and think. They are not doormats. . . A woman may keep quiet but she will burst and talk one day. When she does people will say, 'She's right, she has tolerated it for a long time.'"

I will miss my work. I will miss the many voices of women I had the fortune of hearing. I will miss the stories that were shared. But I will also enjoy spending a little more time with my family.

Peace to you all. ♦

ACROSS THE GLOBE

The **Women's Mobilization for Peace and in Opposition to the War** march took place in Bogotá, Colombia, on July 25, 2002. About 20,000 women gathered in the National Park of Bogotá to protest war in their country and to march for justice and peace. This included a group of women representing the Mennonite Churches of Bogotá.

On October 3, 2002, **the World Health Organization released the first World Report on Violence and Health**. The report is the first comprehensive study on a global scale of what is known to date about the causes and consequences of violence and about the potential for preventive action. This campaign is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of family violence. To get involved, contact the WHO for a kit of information that will assist you in organizing events on family violence prevention at a local, regional, national or international level. For more information, check out the Web site at:

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/, write Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention, World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland or fax: 41 22 791 4332.

Iraq's Little Secret. According to Nicholas D. Kristof of the *New York Times*, Iraq is the gem of the Islamic world in terms of societal treatment of women. Women in Iraq can be the "bosses" of men, men and women can talk in the streets, they can pray together at mosques, they can court or quarrel, girls compete in after-school sports, and television stations broadcast women's sports. While it is true that "the relative equality of women in Iraq had little to do with (Hussein's) leadership," perhaps the U.S. government should consider the contrast between an enemy that empowers women and allies, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, that repress them. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Iraq's Little Secret," *New York Times*, October 1, 2002.

To the Editor of *Women's Concerns Report*

I WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED AND intrigued when I received the September-October issue of *Women's Concerns Report*. I had a feeling that the topic of "Women who have left the church" would hit home and help me process some of my own struggles regarding the church. Thank you for addressing this subject.

I was frustrated and deeply saddened, however, when I read that you were not given permission to include an article by a lesbian. How ironic that this decision would be made in an issue of the *Report* about why people leave the church. Upon reading this my struggle continues. My personal struggle is how to remain part of a church where people are not welcomed and voices silenced because of their sexual orientation.

Mary Beth Landis Jantzen
Tucson, Arizona
United States of America

To the Editor of *Women's Concerns Report*

I JUST FINISHED READING THE MOST RECENT issue of the *Report*. Sometimes I need to kick myself into gear to just stop and read, but always find myself rewarded for having taken the time to do it.

I enjoy checking out the "Women in Leadership" column (Editor's note: now called "Women in Church Leadership") in whatever corner it appears. It took me awhile before I realized it's in each issue, but may take a different shape each time. I was curious how you decide which names are to be included in this column.

I really like the illustrations by Theresa Pankratz, too—very "distinguished," though I don't know if that's a word one should use regarding art.

E. Elaine Kauffman
Mountain Lake, Minnesota
United States of America

LETTERS

Editor's note: The goal of this column is to offer a place for our readers to respond to the issues raised and the perspectives presented in *Report*. Although we try to print all letters, they may be shortened or edited to fit available space. All letters must be signed, but writers may request to have their names withheld.

Mennonite Women has added a number of resources to their Web page. These include a program that calls women to be peacemakers, Spanish-language devotionals from their 2002 Bible study guide and a mini-archive of articles from *Timbrel* magazine. Take a look at <http://www.mennonitewomenusa.org>.

The sixth biennial **Women Doing Theology Conference** organized by women in the North American Anabaptist community will be held at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, from May 16–18, 2003. *Gifts of the Red Tent: Women Creating* will celebrate theology and the arts. Presentations will be given by Malinda Berry, Reta Halteman Finger, and Iris de León-Hartshorn. Dorothy Gish, Maggie de León, and Katie Funk Wiebe

will offer responses to the presentations. For more information, contact Women's Concerns, MCC U.S., P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501; see the Web site: <http://www.mcc.org/womendoingtheology/> or email to tjh@mccus.org.

The **Abbotsford International Hair Show**, held on August 10 in a Mennonite church parking lot next to the gates of the Abbotsford International Air Show, Abbotsford, British Columbia, was meant to provide a positive and peaceful response to the celebration of war airplanes. Free haircuts and information on alternatives to war were offered while \$185 in donations, which will be used to help victims and refugees resulting from bombs dropped in Afghanistan, was received.

NEWS & VERBS



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WOMEN'S CONCERNS REPORT

Looking Forward

MARCH-APRIL 2003

Healing from and
preventing
abuse: MCC's work



MAY-JUNE 2003

Women in Columbia



JULY-AUGUST 2003

Women's roles and
how they've changed



SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2003

Theological grounding
for gender equality

Women in church leadership

Sheree Boman accepted a pastoral position with the Trinity United Church of Christ in Highland, Kansas.

Yvonne Diaz Keeler has been appointed as the next MCC Great Lakes director starting January 2003. She has been a member of the MCC Great Lakes board and several other local service agency boards. She has worked for Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries and Mennonite Mutual Aid.

Elizabeth Nissely accepted a full-time associate pastor assignment at James Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Ruth Eby Penner began in a pastoral position at New Creation Fellowship, Newton, Kansas on September 15, 2002.

The Alumni Association of Eastern Mennonite University has awarded Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz with the 2002 Distinguished Service Award. This award is given to alumni who have demonstrated Christian service and peacemaking. Lorraine is the director of the Office on Crime and Justice for MCC U.S., our colleague in Peace and Justice Ministries, and has done significant work in restorative justice and with the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program.

Louise Wideman began serving as the associate pastor of congregational life at First Mennonite Church in Bluffton, Ohio, on November 15, 2003.